

Factory output contracts again, falls to lowest in 6 years

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 11

CONTRACTING FOR the second consecutive month, factory output for September plunged to (-) 4.3 per cent, with all three sectoral constituents — manufacturing, mining and electricity — recording negative growth, data released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) Monday showed.

The manufacturing sector, which carries a weight of 77.63 per cent in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), contracted for the second month in a row by 3.9 per cent in September compared to a 4.8 per cent growth last year, while mining sector output, with a weight of 14.37 per cent in the index, contracted 8.5 per cent

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED
E.
Confirms slowdown, a glimmer

THE CONTRACTION in September IIP reaffirms the structural growth slowdown and raises expectations of another RBI rate cut. On the positive side, the 7% growth in intermediate goods in September raises hopes for positive IIP growth after a gap. While IIP growth in October is expected to stay negative, a mild IIP expansion is projected from November.

EXPRESS NETWORK

CRZ RULES VIOLATION: KERALA FLATS TO BE DEMOLISHED IN JAN
PAGE 11

Guru Nanak

A RED initiative appears in today's edition of *The Indian Express*. These pages are an initiative of the marketing solutions team of The Indian Express Group and contain content paid for by advertisers. These pages should be read as an advertisement.

Ex-Army officer's death in Tihar: Police say China link, Rs 65-cr FD

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 11

FOUR DAYS after Captain Mukesh Chopra, a discharged Army officer, allegedly fell to his death in Tihar Jail, prompting a magisterial inquiry, police sources claimed their investigation had found that the 64-year-old had been staying at a guest house of the Aviation Research Centre where his room had been booked by a retired officer who

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Jawaharlal Nehru University students protest in New Delhi on Monday. Praveen Khanna

JNU students protest against fee hike, HRD says will find a way out

SUKRITA BARUAH
& ARANYA SHANKAR
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 11

UNION HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal was trapped inside the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) campus for around three hours Monday, after the main gate was blocked by JNU students protesting against a hike in hostel fee.

Pokhriyal had been invited as

guest of honour to JNU's third convocation ceremony.

Alleging that the Vice-Chancellor had refused to meet them, the students, led by the JNU Students' Union, raised the slogan: 'No convocation without affordable education.'

The main point of protest is the introduction of service charges — for maintenance, mess workers, cook and sanitation — which were so far not included in the hostel fee. Under

the new hostel charges, students have to pay an approximate service charge of Rs 1,700 per month. Rent for a single room has been increased from Rs 20 per month to Rs 600 per month, and for a double-sharing room from Rs 10 per month to Rs 300 per month. Students will also

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FULL COVERAGE
PAGE 4

BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNNY

T.N. Seshan (1932-2019)
(in indelible ink)

foreign exchange laws.

Sources said the ED is looking at the Rs 7.25 crore raised by Nourish Organic Foods Pvt Ltd in March 2019 from Saama Capital, a Mauritius-based India-focused early-stage investor. Saama Capital has invested in a number of start-ups in India including Paytm, ChaiPoint, Vistaar (NBFC), Snapdeal and SKS Microfinance. Abir is the director of Nourish

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Now ED probes firm in which EC Lavasa's son is director

RITIKA CHOPRA &
DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 11

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has begun an investigation under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) against Abir Lavasa, son of Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa, and the company in which he is a director for alleged violation of

MAHARASHTRA: PRESIDENT'S RULE LOOMS

Sena's bid falls through, Governor gives NCP a day

Key question for all: Will Sena play second fiddle in NCP-led govt?

SANDEEP ASHAR &
ZEESHAN SHAIKH
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 11

AFTER A day-long political drama which ended with Shiv Sena failing to get Congress-NCP support for a possible coalition government in Maharashtra, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari invited Sharad Pawar's NCP to show its willingness to form the government by 8.30 pm Tuesday.

Earlier, the BJP, the single-largest party with 105 seats, and invited first by the Governor, expressed its unwillingness to stake claim for government formation. Shiv Sena, the second largest party with 56 seats, was invited next, but it could also not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Outside Matoshree, in Mumbai on Monday. Prashant Nadkar

Cong closes door on Sena but NCP window still open

MANOJ CG &
ZEESHAN SHAIKH
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI,
NOVEMBER 11

THE CONGRESS Monday virtually dashed Shiv Sena's hopes of forming a government under its leadership in Maharashtra as the

party high command chose ideological compulsions over practical politics. It was classical Congress at play as the party's central leadership did not buckle

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

RELATED REPORTS
PAGE 8

Which trust will build the temple? In Ayodhya, war of words breaks out

MAULSHREE SETH
AYODHYA, NOVEMBER 11

TWO DAYS after the Supreme Court ruled that the entire Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site be transferred to a trust constituted by the Centre for the construction of a Ram temple, elation has given way to a war of words in Ayodhya on the nature

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

AYODHYA: BID TO DO COMPLETE JUSTICE
BY UPENDRA BAXI
PAGE 14

of the proposed trust and its composition.
Mahant Nritya Gopal Das,

a leading light of the Ayodhya temple movement in the 1990s and president of the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas, told *The Indian Express* Monday that there is no need to form a new trust because the Nyas is a trust constituted for construction of the Ram temple and others like the Nirmohi Akhara can join it to complete the task.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

DLF

May Guru Nanak Dev Ji
be your guiding light through
the course of your life.

WE WISH YOU
A HAPPY GURPURAB



THE ULTIMATE LIFESTYLE, ONE WITH THE ELEMENTS.

Gymnasium | Tennis Courts | Cafeteria | Community
Shopping Center | Usable Stilt Area | Banquet Hall



THE ULTIMA
BY DLF

For more information, call: +91 9606046698



DOWNLOAD APP

- VISUAL STORIES
- DAILY BRIEFING
- PODCASTS
- CUSTOMIZABLE NEWS EXPERIENCE

Indian Express
★★★★★ 4.6

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO
DOWNLOAD THE APP



WHAT WAS KAPIL DEV'S GREATEST KNOCK, THE 'REAL STAR' OF RANVEER'S NEW FILM '83'?

While Tunbridge Wells may not ring a bell to the modern generation, it is the ground where arguably Indian cricket's most defining innings was played by the 'Haryana Hurricane' on a cold, windy day in front of 4,000-odd people, 36 summers back on a June Saturday morning

VIDEO OF THE DAY



FLYOVER TO CONNECT BKC TO CHUNABHATTI

After missing many deadlines, the flyover was opened to public

FULL COVERAGE



JNU STUDENTS CLASH WITH POLICE

JNUSU has been on a strike against the Draft Hostel Manual

EXPRESS AUDIO

New developments in the Pegasus Whatsapp hack case

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Detailing why the Chhattisgarh government is launching an investigation into whether the Israeli NSO group met state police a few years ago, and its political significance

FROM PAGE ONE

Factory output

as against 0.1 per cent growth last year, data showed.

This is the lowest level since the latest series (with 2011-12 base year) was released for 2012-13 onwards, whereas in the old series (2004-05 base), it had contracted by 5 per cent in October 2011.

IIP growth was at 4.6 per cent in September last year, while for the previous month, it was further revised down to (-)1.4 per cent from (-)1.1 per cent estimated earlier. Cumulatively, the industrial output for April-September, the first half of the financial year, grew at 1.3 per cent as against 5.2 per cent in the same period a year ago.

The data showed that capital goods, a proxy for investment demand, shrank by over 20 per cent while both consumer durables and consumer non-durables also contracted.

Barring intermediate goods, among the six use-based groups, all other five groups — primary goods, capital goods, consumer durables and non-durables — recorded contraction in September. The contraction in the capital goods sector was recorded for the ninth straight month, with output declining sharply by 20.7 per cent in September as against a 6.9 per cent growth in the corresponding period last year.

The consumption side, too, posted a grim picture, with consumer durables output staying in the negative territory for the fourth consecutive month by contracting 9.9 per cent in September as against a growth of 5.4 per cent, while consumer non-durables sector, consisting of mainly the fast-moving consumer goods, recording a contraction of 0.4 per cent as against 6.4 per cent growth last year. This, analysts said, belies any hopes of a pre-festive restocking of inventories.

Despite elevated retail inflation, the slowing industrial growth raises hopes of another rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the upcoming December policy meeting with economists expecting IIP growth to stay in negative territory in October as well and pick up November onwards.

"IIP has been very volatile and the small momentum of couple of months fizzles out soon. The Indian economy faces a structural growth slowdown originating from declining household savings and low agricultural growth. This is feeding into low agricultural and non-agricultural wage growth in rural areas which is impacting rural demand adversely. (We) believe monetary authorities will continue to follow accommodative monetary policy and expect further rate cuts in December 2019," said Devendra Kumar Pant, chief economist, India Ratings & Research.

Industrial growth is expected to get some support by pickup in passenger vehicle sales, which

grew 0.28 per cent in October. Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailer and semi-trailers has 4.86 per cent weight in IIP and manufacture of other transport equipment has 1.78 per cent weight. "In July-September FY20, these have contracted by 20.3 per cent and 8.9 per cent, respectively. However, it will be too early to term October 2019 automobile sale as general turnaround," Pant said.

"The outlook for the IIP for October 2019 is disappointing with a worsening in the pace of contraction of auto production and electricity generation, and only a mild improvement in the pace of YoY decline in the output of Coal India Limited. The sharp contraction in electricity generation in October 2019 is likely to have been led by multiple factors, including weaker demand from industry following curtailed production schedules in some sectors, as well as lower domestic demand and farm offtake related to higher than normal rainfall. In our view, the marginal YoY improvement in auto sales in October 2019 (after several months of contraction), was driven by deep discounting during the festive season, and its sustainability remains to be seen," said Aditi Nayar, Principal Economist, ICRA.

In terms of industries, 17 of 23 industry groups in the manufacturing sector have shown negative growth during September 2019 as compared to the same period last year.

The industry group "manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers" recorded the highest negative growth of (-)24.8 per cent followed by (-)23.6 per cent in furniture and (-)22.0 per cent in fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment.

Manufacturing of wood and products of wood and cork, except furniture; articles of straw and plaiting materials have shown the highest positive growth of 15.5 per cent followed by 9.2 per cent in basic metals.

Ayodhya

But Mahant Dinendra Das of Nirmohi Akhara does not agree. "We have been fighting against them i.e. Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas. How can one can expect us to become a member of their trust? They can surrender their trust and become part of the trust with us. We are Nirmohi and cannot be a part of them. It is for the Government to find a solution and bring everyone together," he said.

A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, in a unanimous 5-0 verdict Saturday on the Ayodhya title suit, rejected the Nirmohi Akhara's claim to shabait rights of serving the deity and managing its property. But the Bench, taking note of "the historical presence of Nirmohi Akhara at the disputed site and their role" directed the Centre that it should,

while framing a scheme to

show support for its claim by Monday 7.30 pm, the deadline set by Raj Bhavan.

"As the NCP is the third largest party, the Governor has asked us about our willingness to form the next government. We have told him that we would need to consult with our alliance partner and that we will get back to him as soon as possible," Maharashtra NCP State President Jayant Patil said. NCP won 54 seats in the Assembly elections, results for which were declared on October 24.

While NCP will continue talks with alliance partner Congress (fourth largest party with 44 seats) and explore the possibility of government formation, senior party sources admitted it would be difficult to convince the Congress leadership to go along with the Sena before Tuesday 8.30 pm, indicating the state was headed towards a President rule.

Sharad Pawar reached out to Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray late in the night informing him about the call from the Governor to the NCP. "We have been given a mandate to sit in Opposition, but we also have a responsibility of giving a stable government to the state at this time," said Ajit Pawar, NCP's Leader of the Legislative Wing, and nephew of Sharad Pawar.

Pawar said that his party was waiting for a formal letter of support from the Congress. He also said NCP would reach out to Shiv Sena. "We will have a discussion with Uddhav Thackeray as well before we go to the Governor," Ajit said.

NCP and Congress fought the Assembly elections in alliance and together hold 98 seats, still 47 less to cross the half way mark and prove majority, committing the state was headed towards a President rule.

But Sonia, as also most of the senior AICC leaders, sources said, were not comfortable with the idea of backing a Sena government arguing that the party cannot compromise on its ideology. The Congress high command, however, did not rule out any possibility publicly and kept the Sena waiting.

The Congress Working Committee met this morning to discuss the situation at Sonia's 10, Janpath residence. It was decided that top Maharashtra leaders — former Union Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde, former Chief Ministers Ashok Chavan and Prithviraj Chavan and MPCC president Balasaheb Thorat, his predecessor Manikrao Thakre, Avinash Pande, Rajeev Satav and Rajini Patil — be called to Delhi for further discussions. Two Sena leaders, meanwhile, landed in Delhi and held talks with Ahmed Patel but he did not give any

form a trust, assign "an appropriate role in the management" to the Akhara.

The Digambar Akhara — one

of the dominant Akharas in Ayodhya, it used to be headed by Paramhans Ramchandra Das, also the Nyas president, till he passed

away in 2003 — said their chief Mahant Suresh Das would be meeting UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday to discuss the issue. It maintained that no existing trust should be told to construct the Ram temple.

In its order, the Bench said: "The Central Government shall, within a period of three months from the date of this judgment, formulate a scheme pursuant to the powers vested in it under Sections 6 and 7 of the

Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act 1993. The scheme shall envisage the setting up of a trust with a Board of Trustees or any other appropriate body under Section 6."

Nyas chief Mahant Nritya Gopal Das questioned the need for a new trust: "Kis liye banayenge, kaun banayega aur kaun usmein rahaga? Kyu jaroorat hai? (Why should it be formed? Who will form it? Who will be its members? What is the need?)"

Mahant Suresh Das of Digambar Akhara confirmed he would be meeting the Chief Minister. "Ab CM se charcha karke batayenge (Will speak once I have discussed with the CM)," he said. "It is a beautiful judgment. It is necessary to form a new trust, like the Somnath temple trust, because it is not the work of the government to construct a temple," he said.

Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act 1993. The scheme shall envisage the setting up of a trust with a Board of Trustees or any other appropriate body under Section 6."

Nyas chief Mahant Nritya Gopal Das questioned the need for a new trust: "Kis liye banayenge, kaun banayega aur kaun usmein rahaga? Kyu jaroorat hai? (Why should it be formed? Who will form it? Who will be its members? What is the need?)"

Mahant Suresh Das of Digambar Akhara confirmed he would be meeting the Chief Minister. "Ab CM se charcha karke batayenge (Will speak once I have discussed with the CM)," he said. "It is a beautiful judgment. It is necessary to form a new trust, like the Somnath temple trust, because it is not the work of the government to construct a temple," he said.

Lavasa's son Organic Foods Pvt Ltd since

November 14, 2017.

The agency sent summons to Abir Lavasa last week for appearance before the Investigating Officer of the case. He made an appearance last Friday and was given a week to furnish documents related to the funds raised. ED is learnt to have also sent a summons to the director of Saama Capital.

"There is a probe in connection with investments in the company where Lavasa is a director. The company was loss-making and yet received heavy investments at a premium. So we want to question (Abir) Lavasa about it," an ED official said.

When contacted, Abir Lavasa said, "Yes, a summons was received last week. We are fully complying with the ongoing inquiry." He declined to elaborate.

This comes just months after the Income Tax Department surveyed the books of accounts of Nourish Organic Foods Ltd. Abir Lavasa holds 10,000 shares in the company. The company had been served a notice by the IT department in August.

As first reported by The Indian Express on September 25, three members of the Lavasa family, including Ashok Lavasa's wife Novel, are under the scanner of the Income Tax Department for alleged non-declaration of income and disproportionate assets. Abir Lavasa's company (Nourish Organic) and his sister Shaktuntala Lavasa, a pediatrician, have also received income tax notices. Hearings in the cases are in progress. That apart, on August 29 the government wrote to 11 PSUs to verify their records for any exercise of "undue influence" by Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa during his tenure in the Power Ministry from 2009 to 2013.

Incidentally, Ashok Lavasa, one of the three commissioners in the Election Commission, had on five occasions opposed the clean chit given by the Commission to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former BJP president Amit Shah on charges of violating the Model Code of Conduct during the campaign for the Lok Sabha elections.

As reported by The Indian Express in September, RoC documents show Nourish Organic was promoted by Seema Jindal Jajodia, wife of Sandeep Jajodia, Chairman and Managing Director, Monnet Group, and daughter of the late O P Jindal. It earned a profit of Rs 16.86 lakh on total revenue of Rs 5.33 crore in 2017-18. The previous year, it reported a loss of Rs 24.4 lakh on revenues of Rs 3.4 crore.

The tax department concluded that the "effective management" of Nourish Organics vests with Abir, given that Seema Jajodia resigned two months after he became director in November 2017. Another director, Naresh Kumar, resigned the same day Abir joined.

Ex-Army officer

had once worked with the ARC. Chopra, the sources claimed, had been chatting with a China-based individual via a social media app.

Arrested on November 2 for allegedly stealing strategy-related books, Canada-based Chopra was questioned in police custody for three days. He was sent to judicial custody on November 6 and died a day later.

Chopra's lawyer and brother have questioned the circumstances of his death and the police insinuation that he had been spying for the Chinese.

On November 8, his lawyer Deepak Tyagi questioned the Tihar authorities account that Chopra jumped off a jail building: "If they had accused him of spying for the Chinese government, then he should have been kept in a secure ward. We have also found that he was not given proper medical care while taken

to hospital".

His brother Rangnesh Chopra told The Indian Express: "My brother was subjected to interrogation which lasted for more than 15 hours every day he was in police custody. He would sleep for only five hours before they would wake him up. My brother was a former Indian Army officer and he was branded a spy."

Police claimed they recovered four mobile phones from Chopra at the time of his arrest. "Chopra disclosed he had served as a Captain with a parachute regiment and was posted in Leh. He was discharged from service in 1983. He claimed he had property in Chhatrapur and Greater Kailash. He also claimed he had Rs 65 crore in fixed deposits," an officer said.

According to police, Chopra moved to Canada with his wife and daughter in 1983, and later obtained a US passport. "He had an Overseas Citizen of India card. His passport had a long-term Chinese visa valid till 2025, and in his personal diary, there were names of some members of the Chinese United Front Work Department. He had been visiting India since 2007. He had made 15 visits, even contacted defence officials," police sources said.

On October 31, Chopra reached Delhi via Hong Kong. Police sources claimed he was received at the airport by a retired officer who had worked with the ARC while on deputation. Chopra had helped his sons find jobs in the US and Canada, sources said.

JNU protest

have to pay utility charges, which they did not have to so far. The JNU Executive Council is supposed to give the final nod to the new hostel charges on November 13.

In a tweet later, the HRD Ministry said that Pokhriyal had a "positive conversation with JNU students about their problems. He assured them that a solution will be found soon".

During the course of the protest outside the venue, which began shortly before noon, police tried several means to move students away from the gate, including the use of a water cannon which was deployed around 1:30 pm. As more than 500 students assembled at the West Gate of the university campus, closest to AICTE, in the morning, they found that the gate was barricaded.

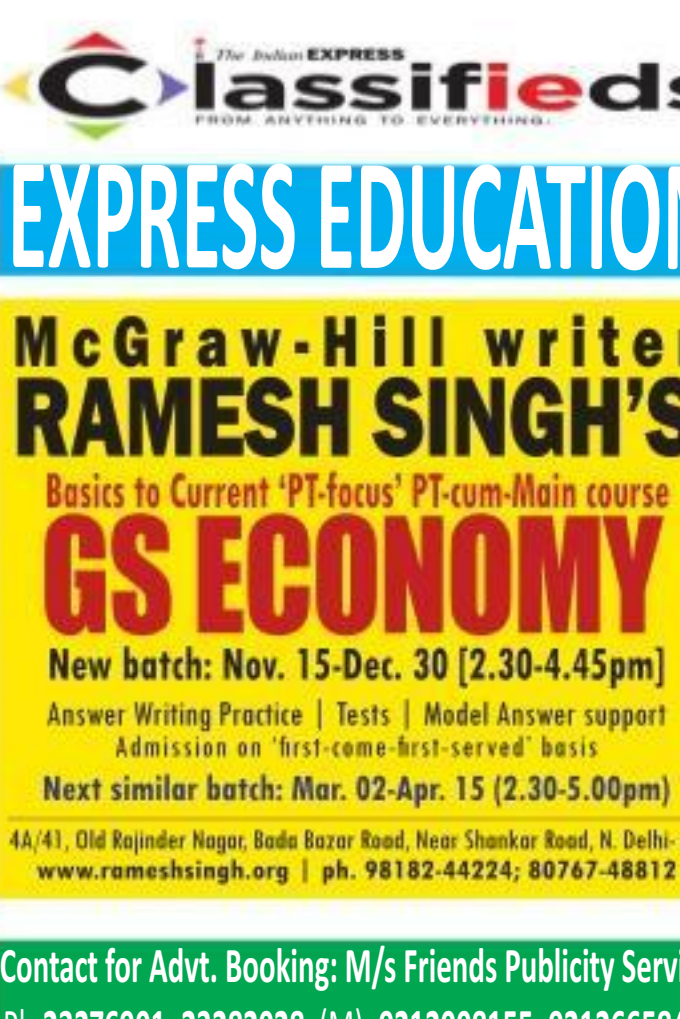
Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu was the chief guest of the event. However, he left the event, which began at 9:30 am, before students reached the venue.

"The police team controlled the situation and the Vice-President was safely escorted outside the campus at 11:40 am," said DCP Devender Arya.

In the afternoon, the four JNUSU office-bearers met with the HRD minister. "Police themselves facilitated the meeting, saying that we would meet the vice-chancellor, but he was nowhere to be found. Instead, we met with the minister for around 15-20 minutes, most of which time we spent explaining the problems to him. We also submitted a memorandum. He said he would organise a meeting with the vice-chancellor, with us as a part of it," claimed JNUSU vice-president Saket Moon.

According to a senior ministry official, students will meet the Deans on November 15. However, the official admitted that the JNU administration should have engaged the students better. "We are looking at options to defuse the situation," the officer said. The 11-point memorandum essentially demanded that the draft Inter-Hall Administration (IHA) manual be withdrawn and that a fresh IHA meeting, including various stakeholders of the university, be called.

ALL FULL REPORTS ON www.indianexpress.com



EXPRESS EDUCATION

McGraw-Hill writer RAMESH SINGH'S

Basics to Current 'PT-focus' PT-cum-Main course

GS ECONOMY

New batch: Nov. 15-Dec. 30 [2.30-4.45pm]

Answer Writing Practice | Tests | Model Answer support

Admission on 'first-come-first-served' basis

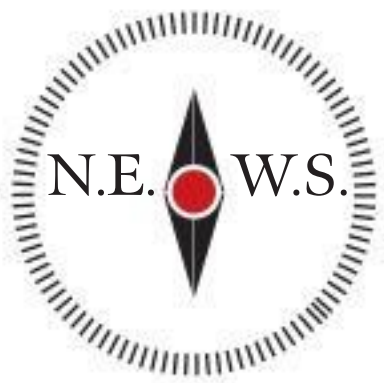
Next similar batch: Mar. 02-Apr. 15 (2.30-5.00pm)

4A/41, Old Rajinder Nagar, Badli Bazar Road, Near Shankar Road, N. Delhi- 60

www.rameshsingh.org | ph. 98182-44224; 80767-48812

Contact for Advt. Booking: M/s Friends Publicity Service

Ph. 23276901, 23282028 (M): 9212008155, 9212665841.



NORTH

Man’s body found with eyes gouged out

Banda (UP): The body of a 40-year-old man, wearing a sadhu’s robe, was found with his eyes gouged out in Budhauli village in Banda, police said on Monday. Circle Officer Kuldeep Singh said post-mortem has established that Krishna Kumar alias Lala was strangled to death. He added that the man had a criminal history with five cases registered against him. Krishna was living in a Durga temple in the village along with other sadhus for the past few months, Baberu Kotwali SHO Shashi Kumar Pandey said. His body was found in the fields on Sunday. It appeared that the assailants had gouged out his eyes, the SHO said. **PTI**



Rescue operations under way at the site of accident, in Hyderabad on Monday. **PTI**

SOUTH

16 injured as two trains collide in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Two slow-moving trains collided at Kacheguda Railway station here on Monday, leaving 16 people injured, including a driver who was trapped in his mangled cabin for eight hours, officials said. The Lingampalli-Falaknuma multi-modal transport system overshot the signal and collided with the Kurnool-Secunderabad Hundry Intercity Express at 10.41 am, officials said. Commissioner Railway Safety, Southern Central Circle Secunderabad, will conduct an inquiry. The Railway Ministry has announced ex-gratia of Rs 5,000 each to those with minor injuries and Rs 25,000 each to those with grievous injuries. Railways minister Piyush Goyal instructed the authorities for extending assistance. **ENS**

EAST

Youth dies after mobile explodes while charging

Paradip (Odisha): A 22-year-old man died after his mobile phone, which was being charged, exploded while he was sleeping in a room at a construction site in Paradip, police said on Monday. The incident took place late on Sunday night when the deceased, identified as Kuna Pradhan, who worked as a mason, was sleeping along with three other workers in the room at a construction site at Atharabanki area, Inspector-in-Charge of Paradip police station R K Samal said. The mobile phone, which was being charged and placed near Pradhan’s bed, exploded when all of the four persons were asleep, the police officer said. **PTI**

WEST

Lata Mangeshkar admitted to hospital, in critical condition

Mumbai: Singer Lata Mangeshkar was admitted to Breach Candy Hospital’s Intensive Care Unit in the early hours of Monday after she complained of breathing problems, hospital sources said. The singer, who turned 90 on September 28, is in a critical condition, they said. “She was brought to hospital at about 2 am. She is critical and in the ICU,” a hospital insider told PTI. Mangeshkar’s younger sister Usha said the singer had a viral infection and should be discharged by Tuesday. “Lata didi is still in hospital. She is under observation. She is doing absolutely well and is stable. She will be discharged by tomorrow,” said Usha Mangeshkar. **PTI**

In Andhra, Telugu medium schools to switch to English; TDP and BJP protest

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, NOVEMBER 11

FOLLOWING ITS decision to convert all Telugu medium government schools to English medium, the Andhra Pradesh government has decided to set up English “labs” in all its Telugu medium schools.

While the government order, issued on November 9, said permission had been granted “to the Commissioner of School Education to convert all government, MPP (mandal praja parishad) schools and zilla parishad schools... into English medium from Classes I to VIII from the academic year 2020-21, for Class IX from the academic year 2021-22, and for Class X from the academic year 2022-23”, the state government said on Monday that the order would be implemented for Classes I to

VI in the first phase. “However, the Commissioner of School Education shall take appropriate and adequate efforts to implement Telugu/ Urdu as a compulsory subject, depending on the current medium of instruction in all the schools,” the government order said.

“We will protect the right of students given under the Right To Education Act to be taught in their mother tongue and won’t undermine Telugu language. Telugu will be taught as a compulsory subject. But we plan to switch the language of teaching from Telugu to English over the next couple of years. We will train all Telugu medium teachers and recruit new ones also. We want to implement this because Telugu medium students are lagging behind as compared to English medium students. Telugu medium students strug-



‘To eradicate poverty, students should get jobs, for which English as a medium of instruction is important’

gle to cope with studies in higher education and also lose out on employment opportunities due to lack of English skills,” said Education Minister A Suresh. Education department officials said all teachers in Telugu medium schools would receive adequate training before they start teaching in English. “We are

better. We will continue to protest until the government withdraws its order. It is an ill-advised move because there aren’t enough English teachers to train all the Telugu medium teachers,” said Joseph Sudheer Babu, president of the Andhra Pradesh State Teachers’ Union.

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan and BJP leader Lanka Dinakaran have also criticised the government’s decision. Defending the move on Monday, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said: “To eradicate poverty, students should get jobs, for which English as a medium of instruction is important... The state’s illiteracy rate has been 33% against the national rate of 27%. The focus has to be on primary education, which is why we plan to make Classes I to VI English medium... this will ensure a level playing field.”

Defending the move on Monday, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said: “To eradicate poverty, students should get jobs, for which English as a medium of instruction is important... The state’s illiteracy rate has been 33% against the national rate of 27%. The focus has to be on primary education, which is why we plan to make Classes I to VI English medium... this will ensure a level playing field.”

Pinarayi: Kerala considering opening pubs

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Monday indicated that the government was considering opening pubs in the state. In office since 2016, the CPI(M) government has been easing the state’s liquor policy, contrary to the prohibition envisaged by the previous Congress government.

In a government-sponsored weekly TV programme, Vijayan said there is a complaint that professionals in sectors such as IT, who work late hours, do not have enough opportunities for entertainment and the government is considering opening of pubs in such circumstances.

The chief minister said better facilities would be introduced at retail liquor outlets run by state enterprises to ease hardship faced by consumers, who are forced to stand in long queues.

The idea to open pubs comes after the government’s decision to give licence for small breweries that want to make wine and low-alcohol content liquor from locally available fruits. **ENS**

AYODHYA VERDICT



A sadhu in Ayodhya on Monday. Lakhs of devotees are expected to take a dip in the Saryu river on Kartik Purnima on Tuesday. The district administration has made elaborate arrangements for the occasion. **Ritesh Shukla**

After welcoming SC order, IUML calls it disappointing

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOVEMBER 11

TWO DAYS after welcoming the Supreme Court’s Ayodhya verdict, stating that the party would examine it in detail in time, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), an ally of the Congress in Kerala, on Monday said that the judgment is “full of contradictions”, and that the Muslim community is “highly disappointed” with it.

The IUML’s stance on Ayodhya verdict goes against that of ally Congress, which on Saturday declared that it was in favour of a Ram temple at the disputed site.

After the IUML national secretariat meeting in Malappuram, Kerala, party president K M

Kader Mohideen told the media: “The verdict is full of contradictions, about which the community is highly disappointed. The SC is the apex court of the country; (and) its judgment... is to be respected. The meeting also appreciates the mature attitude of the Muslim community, as well its sister communities, in maintaining harmony and peace.”

Senior leader and party MPE T Muhammed Basheer said Indian Muslims are “wounded”. He said: “The court found that installation of idol of 1949 and Babri Masjid’s mosque demolition in 1992 are criminal offences. But the same land has been given to those associated with those criminal offences. There are several such contradictions which have left the community wounded.”

EXPLAINED When Babri left the party split

THE IUML had suffered a split over its moderate stand on the issue in the wake of Babri Masjid’s demolition in 1992. Late Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait, a multiple-term MP, wanted IUML to leave the then Congress-led UDF government in Kerala in protest. With a majority in the party opposing the exit plan, Sait walked out of IUML and founded Indian National League, which is now an ally of CPI(M)-led LDF in Kerala.

Kalyan Singh: Verdict justified, accepted by all

Lucknow: Terming the recent Supreme Court judgment in Ayodhya case as “justified, inclusive and accepted by all,” veteran BJP leader Kalyan Singh, who was UP Chief Minister when the Babri Masjid was demolished on December 6, 1992, on Monday said that with the path for the temple cleared, his “life-long dream” was coming true.

Talking to mediapersons for the first time after Saturday’s verdict, Kalyan said the apex court decision is not a win or loss for anyone.

Asked about the criminal case against him related to the demolition of the Babri Masjid, he said, “I do not know how much time it will take. There are a few questions which will be raised by lawyers and I have decided that I will answer those questions there only.” **ENS**

Harish Rawat announces Ayodhya visit on Nov 29

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, NOVEMBER 11

SENIOR CONGRESS leader and former Uttarakhand CM Harish Rawat has announced a visit to the makeshift Ram temple in Ayodhya on November 29 — he is the first political leader to do so after the Supreme Court verdict on the disputed site.

In multiple tweets on Saturday, Rawat wrote, “The country has to walk a long distance from here and

had ordered three-way division of the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site between the Nirmohi Akhara sect, the deity Ramlalla Virajman and the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board.

It ruled that the entire disputed land be handed over to a trust to be constituted for construction of a Ram temple and that Muslims be given five acres of either the acquired land near the site or at “a suitable prominent place in Ayodhya” for building a mosque.

“Possession of the inner and outer courtyards shall be handed over to the Board of Trustees of the Trust or to the body so constituted. The Central Government will be at liberty to make suitable provisions in respect of the rest of the acquired land by handing it over to the Trust or body for management and development in terms of the scheme framed in accordance with the above directions,” the Bench said.

“Nirmohi Akhara’s claim to be a shebait stands rejected. However, having regard to the historical presence of Nirmohi Akhara at the disputed site... we direct that in framing the scheme, an appropriate role in the management would be assigned to the Nirmohi Akhara,” it said.

we can only progress together. I will go to Ayodhya on November 29 to express thanks to my deity Raja Ram Chandra.”

“I will pray to him that no such dispute should now arise in the future that disturbs the social unity and peace of my country,” he tweeted.

After the Supreme Court verdict on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit, the Congress on Saturday said that it was in favour of the construction of a Ram temple.

Babri demolition verdict likely by April next year

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 11

A SPECIAL court in Lucknow, which is hearing the Babri Masjid demolition case in which senior leaders of the BJP and VHP are accused, is most likely to deliver its verdict by April next year when the term of Judge S K Yadav will come to an end.

The Supreme Court had extended the term of Judge Yadav, who was set to retire on September 30 this year, in July this year and directed him to deliver judgment in nine months.

Among the 32 people facing trial in the case are veteran BJP leaders Lal Krishna Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Kalyan Singh and former Union minister Uma Bharti, and sitting MPs Brij Bhushan Singh and Sakshi Maharaj.

“Of the total around 1,000 prosecution witnesses, 348 have so far been examined by the court... The accused of the case are being tried as per charges filed against them,” said defence counsel KK Mishra.

The prosecution is facing trouble to bring the witnesses to record their statements before the court because many have changed their addresses, while several were found to be dead.

After the demolition of Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, two cases were filed in Ayodhya — one related to the conspiracy of demolishing of Babri Masjid and another for instigating the crowd to demolish the structure. Around 47 more cases were lodged then that were merged with the case of demolition.

The trial in the two cases was held separately. The one in Lucknow court on charges of



Two cases filed in Ayodhya after demolition. **Archive**

conspiracy of the demolition of the structure, and the other in Rae Bareilly court for instigating the crowd to demolish the structure.

Of the 22 persons, who were facing trial in the Lucknow court, one has died. The prominent persons among the remaining 21 accused are Pawan Pandey, Brij Bhushan Singh, R N Srivastava, Lallu Singh and Sakshi Maharaj.

Among the 32 facing trial are senior BJP leaders L K Advani, M M Joshi, Kalyan Singh, Uma Bharti, and sitting MPs Brij Bhushan Singh and Sakshi Maharaj

R N Srivastava was then District Magistrate of Faizabad.

In Rae Bareilly court, six were facing trial after the death of two accused — Acharya Giriraj Kishore and Ashok Singhal. VHP leader VH Dalmia, an accused in the Rae Bareilly case, died this year, following which five accused were left that include Lal Krishna Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Vinay Katiyar, Ritambhara and

Uma Bharti.

On April 19, 2017, the Supreme Court ordered the clubbing of the two pending cases and set up a Special Court (Ayodhya Prakaran) in Lucknow to conclude the hearing.

The Supreme Court also ordered the restoration of charges against 13 accused, who were dropped from the case by the High Court earlier. Seven of the total 13 accused have died, including BJP leader and former MP Baikunth Lal Sharma. Six persons who are now facing trial are Ram Vilas Vedanti, Champat Rai, Mahant Nritya Gopal Das, Mahant Dharam Das, Satish Pradhan and the then UP CM Kalyan Singh. The Supreme Court also ordered adding of criminal conspiracy charge (IPC Section 120B) against the accused facing trial in Rae Bareilly.

Meanwhile, Kalyan Singh,

who had immunity as the Governor of Rajasthan, appeared before the special trial court in September this year after his term ended. He is currently on bail.

At present, the special court is hearing prosecution evidence that include recording of statement of witnesses. After it gets completed, the statement of the accused would be recorded under Section 313 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Under Section 313, the judge questions the accused on the basis of evidence put before the court during trial, and the accused is given an opportunity to explain the circumstances and the allegations levelled against him. After its completion, the defence would put up evidence in the support of the accused.

The next stage would be argument before the judgment is pronounced.

TELLING NUMBERS

Indian Police: Feeble capacity, high vacancies, and low diversity

THE FIRST edition of the India Justice Report — brought out by the Tata Trusts in partnership with the Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, DAKSH, TISS-Prayas and Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy — has ranked states and Union Territories on the four pillars of the justice system: Police, Prisons, Judiciary and Legal Aid.

The report underscores the capacity deficit plaguing policing in the country. According to the report, only 1 of the 22 states for which data were available, was able to fully utilise its police modernisation fund.

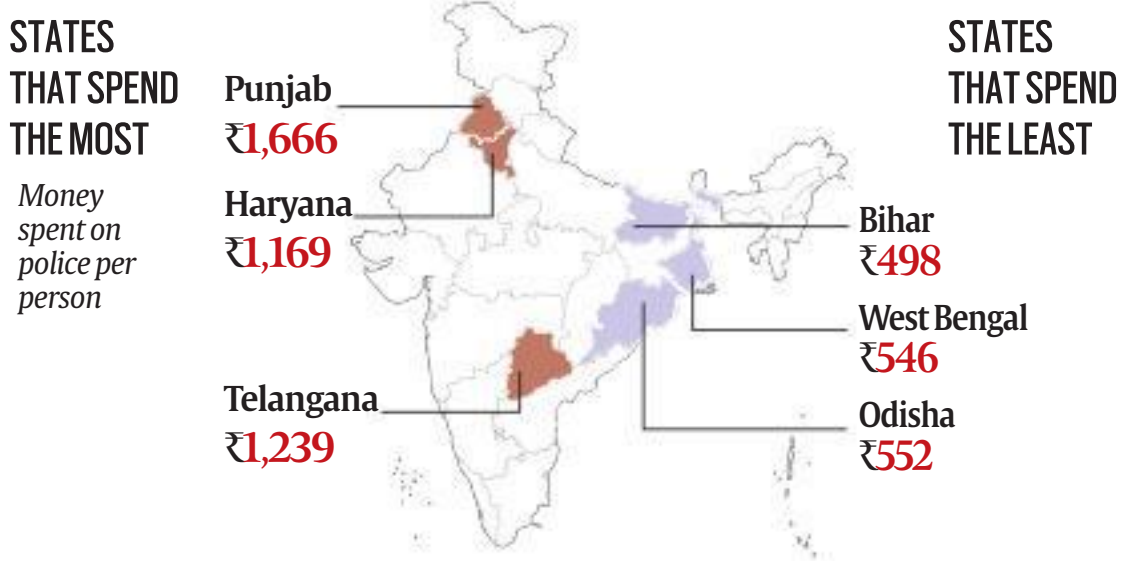
Over the past five years, in just 14 of the 33 states and UTs for which data are available, police expenditure grew more than the state's overall expenditure.

The tables below refer only to the 18 large- and mid-sized states where 90% of India's population lives. The map shows the three states that spent the least and the most respectively on police per person in 2015-16. The report also found that on average there were more than 20% vacancies in the police.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 detail the worst performers among the major states when it comes to vacancies related to SCs, STs and OBCs respectively.

In 2009, the Government of India had adopted a target of 33% reservation for women in police.

As of January 2017, women make up just 7% of police. Table 4 details the number of years required by some states to achieve the 33%-mark at the current rate.



Source: Data on Police Organizations, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D); Combined Finance and Revenue Accounts of the Union and State Governments in India, Comptroller and Auditor General of India; Primary Census Abstract, Census 2011; Open Budgets India

Note: * 2015-16

TABLE 1: STATES WITH THE HIGHEST VACANCY RATES FOR SC OFFICERS

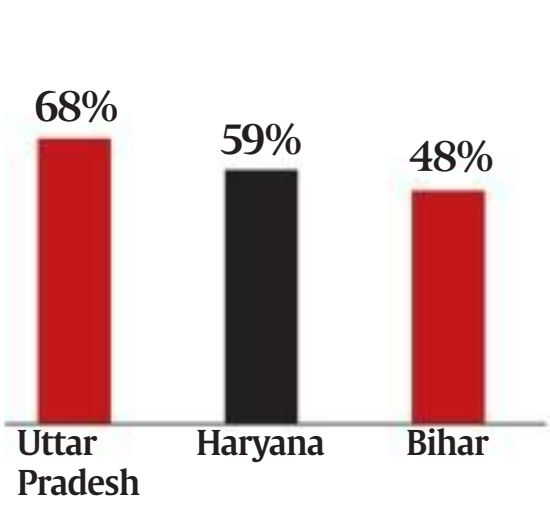
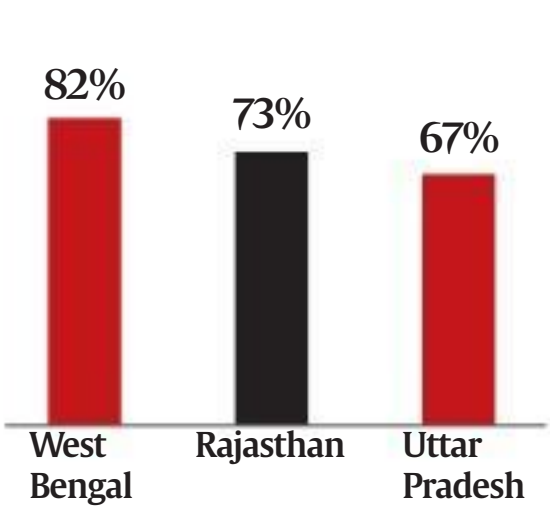


TABLE 3: STATES WITH THE HIGHEST VACANCY RATES FOR OBC OFFICERS



Source: Data on Police Organizations, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)

TABLE 2: STATES WITH THE HIGHEST VACANCY RATES FOR ST OFFICERS

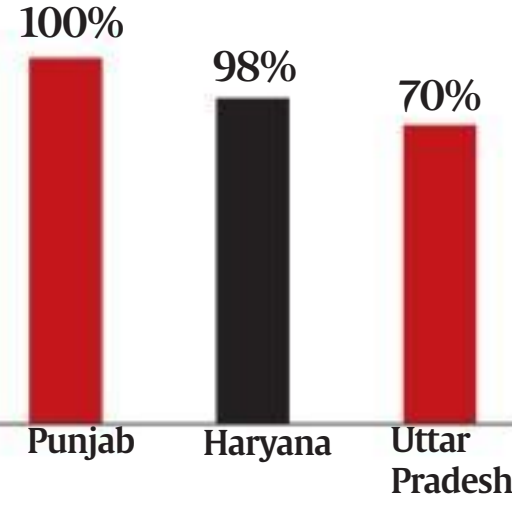
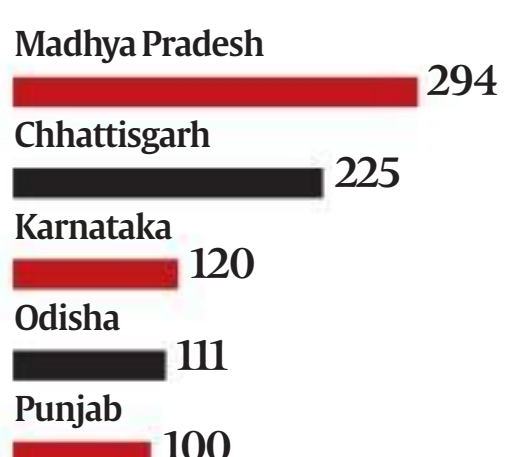


TABLE 4: HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR WOMEN'S SHARE TO REACH 33%?

Number of years



Source: Data on Police Organizations, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)

GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

www.iasscore.in

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

The battle over H-1B, H-4 visas

H-1B and H-4 visas, at the centre of an important lawsuit in the US, have long served as a common passage for Indians into America. Out of the 4,19,637 H-1B applications in 2018, 74% came from India

KARISHMA MEHROTRA

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 11

A UNITED States court ruled on Friday that a group of American-born tech workers have faced heightened job competition from work authorisations given to the spouses of H-1B visa holders. That being said, the judges gave Indian workers living in the US short-term breathing room by leaving the final decision of the ongoing lawsuit up to a lower court.

What are the H-1B and H-4 visas?

The lottery-based H-1B visas allow US companies to employ foreign workers temporarily in specialised occupations for three years, extendable to six years. The issuances are capped at 85,000 a year, but some employers such as universities and research nonprofits are exempt.

Spouses of H-1B workers are granted an H-4 visa, through which some have been allowed to apply to work in the US since a Barack Obama-era 2015 law. Since the law was instituted, a total of 1,20,514 H-4 visas have been granted, of which 1,10,649 have come from India. Out of the 90,946 that were initially approved, 84,935 were for women.

The H-1B visa has long-served as a common passage for Indians into the US. Out of the 4,19,637 H-1B applications in 2018, 74% came from India. Most beneficiaries are aged 25-34, and are in fields involving computers.

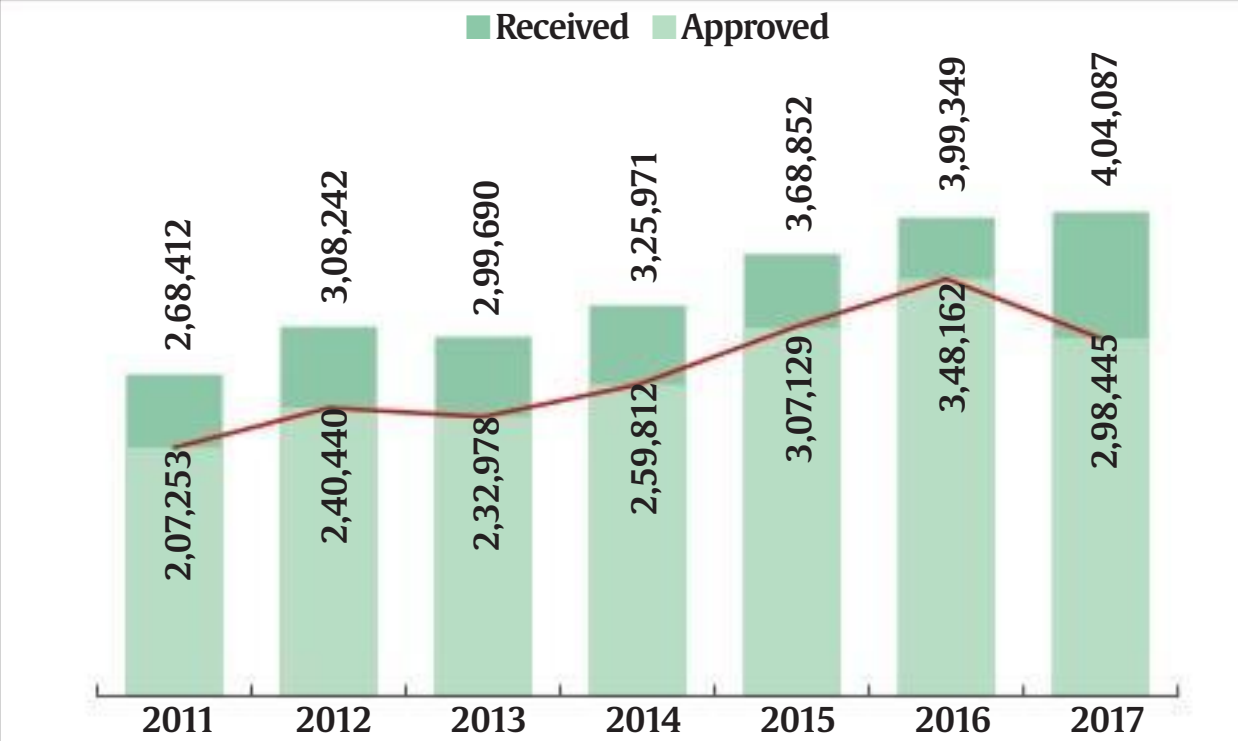
What was the US lawsuit?

The "Save Jobs USA" suit was originally filed in 2015 by two IT workers and one systems analyst against the US Department of Homeland Security. Their affidavits stated that they worked for more than 15 years at Southern California Edison until they were fired and replaced by H-1B visa holders.

The suit argued that the H-4 work authorisation violates immigration law and exceeds Homeland Security's authority.

The plaintiffs lost in the district court in 2016, and appealed in federal court in Washington DC. During the transition between the Obama and Trump administrations, the appeals court held the matter as the new administration was considering eliminating the work authorisation. Homeland

TRENDS OF H-1B VISAS — APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AND APPROVED



RIISING STEADILY: H-1B APPLICATIONS FOR INDIANS

YEAR	NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS
2012	1,97,940
2013	2,01,114
2014	2,27,172
2015	2,69,677
2016	3,00,902
2017	3,02,293
2018	3,09,986

Source: US Citizenship and Immigration Services

Security submitted a memo in September 2019 requesting a hold on oral arguments while they brought out the proposed rule to scrap the H-4 work authorisation. Homeland Security has delayed the move to scrap the H-4 visa spouse rule until spring 2020.

What were the arguments in court?

The court re-visited the matter in December 2018. In the subsequent trials, a lawyer representing the former tech workers argued that US workers were harmed by the "entry of aliens into the job market".

Homeland Security maintained that the damage done to the plaintiffs was due to the H-1B programme, not the work authorisation

given to the spouses. They argued that there was no direct competition between the tech workers and the H-4 visa holders. The judges at the time also expressed concern that the job competition evidence was anecdotal.

In the course of the trial, a brief arguing that the H-4 work authorisation adds to economic growth was submitted by the Information Technology Industry Council, the US Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers. They contended that the work authorisation has added \$5.5 billion-\$13 billion to the GDP, and roughly \$2.4 billion in tax revenues. According to the brief, H-4 spouse visas have created about 6,800 positions in the US, cancelling out the

THIS WORD MEANS | ADVERSE POSSESSION

The Muslims' claim that Ayodhya order rejected

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 11

ONE OF the key legal questions the five-judge Constitution Bench on Saturday answered was related to "adverse possession", raised by the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board, in its suit filed in 1961.

In simple terms, adverse possession is hostile possession of a property — which has to be continuous, uninterrupted and peaceful. The Bench concluded that the adverse possession claimed by Muslims was not continuous and exclusive in nature, and hence they could not assert the right of adverse possession.

The Bench reached its conclusion after Hindus were able to establish that the outer courtyard was in their possession after the British erected a railing around the Babri Masjid in 1858.

Why did the Muslim parties claim the right of adverse possession?

Paragraph 11 (a) of the pleadings of Sunni

Central Waqf Board specifically asked for setting up a plea of adverse possession. The plea was based on the assumption that even if a Hindu temple had existed at the site on which the Babri Masjid was constructed about 500 years ago, the Muslims had "perfected" their title by adverse possession by "long, exclusive and continuous possession", because of which the title of the Hindu parties, if any, stood extinguished.

This meant that the Muslim parties set up an alternate plea for adverse possession, if it was established by the Hindu parties that the mosque had been built at the site of the Hindu temple.

However, the Hindu parties argued that the disputed property was a juristic person, which cannot be acquired by adverse possession. It was argued that even if the image of the idol is broken, a deity is immortal — and thus the construction of the mosque on the land did not take away from its character as a deity.

And why did Muslims parties fail to establish their case?

The Bench held that the ingredients of adverse possession must be set up in the pleadings — and proved in evidence.

On evidence, the Bench said that the Muslim parties, "beyond stating" that they have been in long, exclusive and continuous possession beginning from the time when the mosque was built, have not been able to furnish any facts in support of adverse possession; importantly, the Bench pointed out that no records were made available by the Muslim parties with respect to possession for the period between 1528 and 1860.

On what constitutes the ingredients of adverse possession, the Bench relied on observations made by the former Supreme Court judge Justice S Rajendra Babu (in *Karnataka Board of Wakf v Government of India*). The Bench quoted the 2004 judgment: "A person who claims adverse possession should show: (a) on what date he came into possession, (b) what was the nature of his possession, (c) whether the factum of possession was known to the other party, (d) how long his possession has continued, and (e) his posses-

sion was open and undisturbed."

Which effectively meant that the was onus on Muslims to prove with facts that the possession was undisturbed. Besides being unable to prove possession between 1528 and 1860, the Muslims also failed to establish that the possession was undisturbed.

The Bench observed: "...It is impossible for the plaintiffs (the Muslim parties) to set up a case of being in peaceful, open and continuous possession of the entire property. Dr Dhavan (counsel for Muslim parties) repeatedly asserted that the Muslims were obstructed in their offering worship at the mosque as a result of the illegalities of the Hindus... (Dhavan) refers to the incidents which took place in 1856-7, 1934 and 1949.

"The events which are associated with each of the above incidents constitute indicators in the ultimate finding that in spite of the existence of the structure of the mosque, possession as asserted by the Muslims cannot be regarded as meeting the threshold required for discharging the burden of a case of adverse possession."

What SC verdict indicates: Mandal-Kamandal politics has come full circle

RAVISH TIWARI

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 11

WITH THE Supreme Court verdict on the Ayodhya appeals on Saturday, the politics of Mandal and Kamandal as practised so far may have come full circle — and an opening may have been created for their evolution to a new stage.

The forces of Mandal — flagbearers of the politics of social justice and identity — struggled to stay aloft against the rampaging BJP in the Lok Sabha elections of this summer. And the Supreme Court verdict has now put to rest the legal dispute that spawned the politics of Kamandal — or Hindutva — three decades ago.

Both these political forces had in the late 80s and early 90s disrupted the old style politics of the Congress — blows from which the grand old party could not recover. In nine Lok Sabha elections held since then, the Congress has failed to win a majority even once. In contrast, the forces unleashed by Mandal and Kamandal headed the governments formed after six of those nine elections.

While the Mandal demand of caste-based

reservations is older, the BJP was the first to politically weaponise Kamandal — seizing the opportunity presented by the setting up of the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas in 1986.

While the socialist fragments of the post-Emergency Janata government joined forces with V P Singh in his anti-corruption battle against Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the BJP endorsed the demand for the Ram Temple at its Palampur (Himachal Pradesh) convention months ahead of the 1989 elections.

Once Rajiv was dislodged from power, these forces jostled for the political space the Congress had vacated. While socialist elements in the V P Singh government pushed caste-based reservations, the BJP, which was supporting the government from the outside raised the pitch for the Ram Temple. After V P Singh announced reservation for OBC communities in August 1990, L K Advani's Rath Yatra clashed head-on with Mandal leaders Lalu Prasad and Mulayam Singh Yadav.

As a new era of politics came to be expressed in a new lexicon, and the contradiction between the two narratives sharpened, the issue of Bofors, which had driven Rajiv from power, faded into the back-



L K Advani on his first Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1990. Express Archive

ground. In the states of the Hindi heartland, Mandal and Kamandal consolidated their gains at the expense of the Congress.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid on its watch came as a crushing blow for the Congress in UP and Bihar. The leaders of so-

cial justice/identity politics — Mulayam, Lalu, Kanshi Ram — benefitted as the Congress's stock fell among the minority community. And the BJP rode the Ram Temple movement to gain robust footholds in (undivided) Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and (undivided) UP. In 139 Lok Sabha seats across UP (including Uttarakhand) and Bihar (including Jharkhand), the Congress was virtually eliminated from the field.

The Congress sought to recover some ground by bringing fragments of its support base in the Mandal parties into its tent by framing the political battle in terms of secular versus communal. By this strategy, the Congress was able to ensure that the first BJP government in May 1996 lasted only 13 days.

In response, the BJP changed tactics — it toned down its rhetoric on the Ram Temple in order to win allies in power in 1998 and 1999. However, the Congress again managed to use the secular-communal binary to stall the BJP in 2004.

The limits of the electoral utility of Kamandal were exposed in 2009, when its original champion L K Advani led the BJP to one of its worst performances since 1991.

Watching from his vantage in Gujarat, Narendra Modi possibly took the cue to re-define the BJP's Hindutva politics with a heavy dose of muscular nationalism. He had

already experimented with powerful attacks on Gen Pervez Musharraf in the 2007 Assembly elections in Gujarat; the defeat of the Advani-led BJP in the Lok Sabha elections created the space for Kamandal plus nationalism — in effect, Hindutva 2.0.

For the BJP, Saturday's verdict marked the culmination of the resolution made 30 years ago in Palampur in June 1989. Incidentally, Saturday's judgment came on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the laying of the foundation of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya by Kameshwar Chopal, a Dalit from Bihar (November 10, 1989).

In a way, the Supreme Court's verdict may be seen as vindication of the BJP's Kamandal politics.

It also raises the question whether the BJP will now aggressively pursue its commitment to bringing a Uniform Civil Code. Its focus on the abrogation of Article 370, the National Register of Citizens, and the Citizenship Amendment Bill indicates it is ready to take its blend of Kamandal and nationalism to a new pitch.

On the other hand, the limitations of the Mandal forces against the new pole of Indian politics, the BJP, have been exposed repeatedly since 2014. Their poor performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections could well indicate they have run their course.

Law ministry, AG to weigh in on Ayodhya temple trust

SC VERDICT AIMPLB to meet on Sunday, take a call on whether to ask for review of verdict

HT Correspondents
■ letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW: The Union government has set the ball rolling to form a trust for the construction of a temple in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya as instructed by the Supreme Court, said a senior official who did not want to be named.

In a historic and unanimous verdict on Saturday, a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi paved the way for a Ram temple at the Ayodhya's disputed site. The bench also directed the Centre to allot a five-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a mosque. The court, in its order, asked the central government to set up, within three months, a trust that will oversee the construction of the temple.

"The judgment is being studied by government law officers. Opinions of the ministry of law and the attorney general will be taken on how to proceed on setting up the trust that will fix the modalities for the construction of



■ A model of the proposed Ram temple in Ayodhya. REUTERS ARCHIVE

a Ram temple in Ayodhya," the official said. Additionally, a team of officials is studying the court order for its technicalities and nuances so that the trust can be constituted exactly as per the verdict, the official said.

Back in Uttar Pradesh, Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas (R/N) head Mahant Nritya Gopal Das said the body wanted chief minister Yogi Adityanath to head the trust. "CM Yogi Adityanath could head the trust in his capacity as mahant [head priest] of the Gorakhnath temple, and not as

the CM," he said. Besides being the CM, Adityanath is also the head priest of the Gorakhnath temple in Gorakhpur.

On Monday, Adityanath was congratulated by members of the UP Cabinet in the first Cabinet meeting held after the SC verdict. The legislators also thanked the people of the state for helping in maintaining peace and order.

Monday's Cabinet meeting, presided over by the CM, approved 13 issues, including the opening of the Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh University.

AIMPLB KEY MEET

A lead counsel for the Muslim parties in the Ayodhya case has said the decision on seeking a review of the verdict would likely be taken in a meeting of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on Sunday.

"The decision whether to seek review of the verdict will be taken on November 17 in the meeting of the AIMPLB," senior advocate Zafaryab Jilani told PTI. Jilani had represented the Muslim parties, including the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board, in the case in trial court, Allahabad high court and the SC.

AIMPLB will hold the meeting at Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, one of the state's oldest Islamic institutions in Lucknow.

"Fifty-one members of the committee would take part in the meeting to discuss Supreme Court's verdict and to decide whether to file a review petition or not," Maulana Khalid Rasheed Farangi Mahall, a senior member of AIMPLB, said.

(With agency inputs)

After Agusta case, probe links Khaitan to 2008 Embraer deal

Neeraj Chauhan
■ letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate claim to have found that Delhi-based lawyer Gautam Khaitan, charged as one of the intermediaries in the 2010 Agusta Westland case, was also involved in laundering ₹26 crore in the 2008 Embraer-Indian Air Force deal.

Officials in the agencies said on condition of anonymity that a charge sheet detailing the proceeds of crime and naming the persons involved will soon be filed.

Khaitan's advocate PK Dubey said on Monday that his client "has never been involved in any money laundering. These are all false charges".

HT has reviewed the internal findings by the agencies in the Embraer case, in which NRI arms dealer Vipin Khanna was named as the main accused. The CBI FIR in the case said Khanna received \$5.6 million – now being treated as "kickbacks" – from the Sao Paulo based firm to influence the defence ministry and DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) officials for the contract to supply three EMB-145 aircraft to government of India as a platform for the Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) Project.

In the first week of September in 2016, Brazilian newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo reported that Embraer was under investigation by the US justice department since 2010 over a contract with the Dominican Republic. In September 2016, a CBI investigation was ordered by the Indian government into the AEW&C deal.

Sharing details of the investigation, one of the officials cited in the first instance said: "Embraer entered into an agency agreement with Khanna's company Cleveden Limited somewhere around February 8, 2005 for his services at a commission of 9%.

This agreement was kept in a safe-box in London. Three years later, Embraer signed a contract with IAF (on July 3, 2008) for providing three highly specialized military aircraft for approx \$208 million. The very next day, Vipin Khanna contacted Embraer and demanded his commission."

"Somewhere around Novem-



■ CBI and ED officials said they will charge-sheet Gautam Khaitan in irregularities in a 2008 Embraer-IAF deal. ARUN SHARMA/HT ARCHIVE

ber 21, 2009, more than a year after the contract was awarded, Embraer, through its wholly owned subsidiary, ECC Investment Switzerland AG executed an agency agreement with a shell company registered in Singapore, Inderdev Aviation Services to make payments to Khanna. On the same day, Inderdev delivered three invoices to ECC, each for \$1.92 million. Embraer, through ECC, remitted these three payments to Inderdev in January and February 2010," this officer added.

Gautam Khaitan, a second of the officials cited in the first instance said, secured the offices of Basmati rice exporting firm, KRBL Ltd for bringing around \$3274,635 (around ₹15.32 crore) to India through its Dubai-based firm KRBL DMCC. KRBL's official role was to only introduce Interdev Aviations to Niki Luftfahrt Austria, at the time a subsidiary of Air Berlin.

The joint MD of KRBL, Anoop Gupta, in his statement to central probe agencies has disclosed that Gautam Khaitan approached him at his Pamposh Enclave office and informed him of a wonderful deal where the company KRBL DMCC could earn a commission of \$3 million. "Khaitan told him that it was a deal wherein some passenger aircraft would be sold to a company in Austria. No investment was to be made from his company. It was also Gautam Khaitan who arranged all the agreements as well," the second official said.

"The probe has further revealed that Khaitan brought (into India) another ₹11 crore through companies controlled by him like Windsor Group

Holdings Ltd, M/s Palmira Consultancy Services Ltd, M/s Carisma Investments Ltd (all directed) to the company of the Khanna family, Mulberry Trading FZE, Dubai and Abhay International," the official added.

Hence, Khaitan was "central to laundering of proceeds of crime worth \$5.6 million (₹26 crore)" he claimed.

Khaitan has already been charged as one of middlemen in the 2010 Agusta Westland deal. CBI has said in its charge sheet dated September 1, 2017, that bribes worth ₹24 million (around ₹160 crore) were given to Khaitan and companies linked to him.

The charge is that Agusta-Westland paid bribes to secure a deal with IAF for the supply of helicopters meant for VIPs. After the allegations arose, the government scrapped the deal in 2014.

Khaitan, in January this year, claimed in a court that ED was forcing him to implicate someone influential in a defence deal struck during the UPA government.

He did not give more details. He was arrested in January in Agusta Westland case. Multiple charge sheets have already been filed in this case.

"His name will now be included in the Embraer deal charge sheet as well as there is substantial evidence that he brought kickbacks into India," said the second officer.

A spokesperson at Embraer's Singapore corporate did not respond to an email and phone query seeking comment.

Calls made to the KRBL corporate office remained unanswered.

Court seeks CBI, ED reply on Michel plea in Agusta case

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court has sought responses from the CBI and the ED on a plea by Christian Michel, the middleman in the controversial Agusta Westland chopper deal, seeking an enquiry against the two probe agencies for allegedly trying to interfere with the consular access given to him.

Filed through advocate Sriram Parakkat on November 8, the plea said the officials of the probe agencies checked all the articles and books sent by the family through the British High Commission. "Even though it is objected by the consular they tried to go through the articles which were carried by the consular..." the plea said.

The application contended that, as per Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963, when consular access is requested, consular officers should be free to communicate with nationals and have access to them.

"The consular access was granted to Michel after four-five requests and many reminders by the British High Commission, as informed by the family, which is also a violation of the above said convention," the plea added.

The matter will be heard on November 18.

HTC

Hry cop booked for sexual harassment

ROHTAK: An assistant sub-inspector (ASD) of Haryana police was booked after his 14-year-old niece accused him of sexual harassment, the Rohtak police said on Monday.

In her complaint, the girl said that on Saturday, the accused came to her home when she was alone. After asking where her mother was, the accused took her to the nearby fields and sexually harassed her, the complainant said. The girl also alleged that the accused threatened her of dire consequences if she narrated the incident to anyone.

However, when her mother returned home, the girl informed her, after which they lodged a complaint with the police. The ASI has been booked under Sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act.

HTC

Harassed on TikTok, says Mumbai woman

MUMBAI: A 21-year-old engineering student has filed a complaint in Mumbai after she was constantly harassed by an unknown person on social media video app TikTok.

In her complaint, the woman has said that the man demanded that she introduce him to her friend, who he had taken a liking to. She said she blocked his account, following which he made 38 fake accounts in her name to contact her on the application.

"The whole fiasco started on May 8 when my TikTok account was bombarded with bulk messages from the harasser who had used my photograph as the display picture of the account. The harasser kept pestering me to

convince my female friend for a date. I simply ignored and blocked the account," the woman told HT.

"I was so mentally tortured that I started to chat with the harasser to get over this bully. I offered the harasser to meet me in person so that we can sit together and resolve the issue, if any. But the unknown person never agreed to meet me," she said.

However, all her fake accounts have been suspended and the investigating team are working on tracing the IP address of the system from which the man contacted the complainant.

Senior inspector of Trombay police station, Siddheshwar Gove, said the police were looking into her complaints.

HTC

TIES IN FOCUS

Prince Charles to begin two-day visit tomorrow

NEW DELHI: Prince Charles of the UK will begin a two-day visit to India on November 13 to celebrate bilateral ties and focus on shared global challenges such as sustainability and climate change.

His engagements in New Delhi include a meeting with the President Ram Nath Kovind, and he will present a Commonwealth Points of Light award to an Indian winner for her exemplary contribution to social development, including the uplift of disabled children, family counseling and therapy sessions.

The visit will come against the backdrop of the UK's planned exit from the European Union and London's efforts to forge

closer ties with New Delhi, especially in trade and investment.

He will visit a gurdwara to celebrate the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak and mark the contribution of the Sikh community in the UK. He will also attend a military service to commemorate the sacrifices of soldiers from India, the UK and across the Commonwealth in World Wars 1 and 2.

British high commissioner Dominic Asquith said Prince Charles, who is making his tenth visit to India, had an enduring interest in promoting the common interests of the two countries and this was "another example of the living bridge" between the UK and India.

HTC

ht hindustantimes

hindustantimes

PALATE

India's Biggest Food & Music Festival

Dates: 15th, 16th & 17th November 2019 | Time: 12 noon to 10 pm

Venue: Nehru Park, Vinay Marg, Chanakyapuri

Free Entry

Search HT Palate Fest on Google Maps

Live Performances | 6 pm onwards

Rocknaama

15th November, Friday

DJ Ojo

15th November, Friday

Kanika Kapoor

16th November, Saturday

DJ Ajay Nautiyal

16th November, Saturday

Astiiva

17th November, Sunday

DJ Sumit Sethi

17th November, Sunday

Jacqueline Fernandez

17th November, Sunday

Star in the City

Food Stalls

AIM Burger | Al-Yousuf | Ami's Food Cafe
Baba Rolls' | Beanly Coffee | Bikanervala
Biryani | Battuta | Brioche Doree | Chaayos
Chutney India | Cohoma Coffee | Crepe-fe
D Nature | Dhamaal Gully | Dolce Gelato
Dosama | El Bueno Coffee | Emoi | Fat Lulu's
Fat Tiger | FlourLess | Flurys | Giani IceCream
Ginger Asian | Health Kitchen By BB | Homely
House of Candy | Indian Republic Canteen By Veda
Kaffa Cerrado | Keventers | Koyla Kebab
La Pino'z Pizzal | Le Cantine | Luncheon
Mama Fu | Miu Gelato | Namaste Asia
Orient Heritage | P.R.E Made By TLC
Parvatiya Preserves | Patiala Tigers
Paul and Mike | Poppins Hotel | Provee
Simply Laddoos | Sugar Loft | Suku Mama
Taj Hotel | Teen Patela

The Bowl Company | The Festive Kitchen
The Great Kabab Factory
Neung Roi Radisson Blu Plaza Airport
The Jalebi Shop | Tony's Italian Pizza
Tunday Kebab | Twisting Scoops | Wafi
Vada Pav Junction | We Desi | Whole foods
Wild Vitamin Water | Wok to Walk | Wrapps
The Art of Dumpling | Mrs. Kaurs
You Mee | Zambar Flavour Of The South
and many more...

Scan this QR code or visit
www.htpalatefest.com
to pre-register yourself for
an express check-in

Live Kitchen by Master Chefs

Nishant Choubay

16th November, Saturday

Harpal Singh Sokhi

16th November, Saturday

Chef Saby

17th November, Sunday

Aditi Govitrikar

17th November, Sunday

Sauces & Dressings Partner

VEEBA
Aaj Kya Khaoge?

Wellness Partner

CALIFORNIA WALNUTS

Education Partner

K. R. MANGALAM UNIVERSITY
THE COMPLETE WORLD OF EDUCATION

Multiplex Partner

INOX
LIVE & MOVIE

Supported by

Qube Communication
THE 4'S OF COMMUNICATION

Digital PR Partner

Radio Partners

94.3 RADIO ONE

www.hindustantimes.com

hindustantimes

htTweets

hindustantimes

The Maharashtra dilemma

The BJP lacks the numbers. Others lack political coherence

The Maharashtra election was supposed to cement the status of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the leading force in the state; reduce the Shiv Sena to a minor adjunct; mark the end of Sharad Pawar’s career; and devastate the Congress. The BJP did emerge as the single-largest party, but was short of a majority. The Sena was indeed the junior partner, but retained enough heft to bargain for rotational chief ministership. Mr Pawar showed why he could not be underestimated, retaining his base, and coming a credible third. The Congress did come last, but the bar for it was so low that it did better than expected.

All this affected power negotiations. The BJP was clear that the government would be led by Devendra Fadnavis. The Sena’s posturing turned out to be more than just posturing; it was serious about claiming chief ministership. Its negotiations with Mr Pawar assumed intensity, even as the latter waited for the Sena to make a formal break with the BJP. And the Congress, desperate to keep the BJP out of power, and primarily guided by Mr Pawar, began entertaining the idea of an alternative alliance.

This is what has led to the political drama over the past two days. The two oldest allies of the National Democratic Alliance have split. The BJP may lose political power in one of India’s most crucial states. But it is not quite clear what will replace it. The Sena, on Monday, attempted to cobble together a coalition with Mr Pawar’s Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). But this was contingent on the Congress, which has emerged as the swing force. It remained divided between those who advocated any step to keep the BJP out, and those who believe that supporting the Sena would mark ideological surrender. Meanwhile, the time given by the Governor to the Sena to stake claim ran out, and he has now invited the NCP. All of this means that the BJP lacks arithmetic, and others lack political coherence. The Karnataka experiment, in which non-BJP parties cobbled together an alliance, is a stark example of the fleeting nature of such experiments. The voters of Maharashtra gave a somewhat fragmented verdict; the political class has made it worse.

ourtake

The independence of TN Seshan

His life had two lessons: The EC must push reforms; institutions must be autonomous

TN Seshan, India’s former chief election commissioner (CEC), who redefined how the largest democratic exercise in the world was conducted, died on Sunday. His death has sparked an outpouring of obituaries across the political spectrum. It is remarkable that a 1955-batch Indian Administrative Service officer, who retired from the Election Commission (EC) almost 25 years ago, is still remembered with such respect.

The reason Seshan was so widely respected, in life and in death, is simple. He understood and implemented the spirit of the constitutional scheme as far the EC was concerned. The EC was, and is, not an arm of the elected executive. It is a statutory body, which draws its legitimacy directly from the Constitution. This gives it independence and autonomy to perform its task freely and fearlessly. This principle guided Seshan, and enabled him to take on political leaders from the prime minister to chief ministers, governments from the Centre to states, and introduce a partial clean-up of the electoral system. He prevented state administrations from becoming a tool of state governments to unfavourably tilt poll outcomes. He did so by enforcing the model code of conduct, which prevented incumbents getting an unfair advantage. He ramped up law enforcement to prevent booth-capturing. He introduced voter identity cards. And he maintained his credibility by being equally strict with all parties. Seshan made a mistake by flirting with politics after retiring, but that would be a small blip in an otherwise stellar career.

There are two lessons from Seshan’s life. One is for electoral reforms in India. Polls need another round of clean-up, and this time, the effort must be directed at reforming political finance. The second is for independent institutions. Don’t let the executive dictate terms, and follow the Constitution in letter and spirit.

straightforward

SHASHI SHEKHAR



1992-2019: From darkness to light

The demolition caused riots and violence. The SC order has sparked hopes of closure and amity

How will history remember December 6, 1992, and November 9, 2019? The first date will be remembered as the day of demolition and the second will be recalled as the day when order was restored.

On December 6 that year, I had high fever. My colleague, Ashok Pandey, called me from Ayodhya saying thousands of *kar sevaks* had entered the disputed premises. He informed me that some had climbed atop the dome and were trying to demolish it, even as the armed police were looking on.

I don’t know how Ashok managed to call me and from where. There were no news channels or their OB vans in those days. The Internet and mobile phones were in the realm of imagination. Landlines were not too efficient.

The newsman in me could not contain himself. I took a cold shower to bring down my body’s temperature. I was then the editor of the Hindi newspaper, *Aaj*, in Agra, and rushed to office. People had, by then, started gathering on the streets. They wanted to know what was happening and the government-owned media was silent.

I was in a meeting with my colleagues when we were told that people have entered our building. Chants of *Jai Shri Ram* echoed in the office. The city’s additional district officer and the superintendent of police, who were passing by, noticed the crowd and came to the office. Even though the crowd just wanted the news, the two officials were worried that it could turn violent.

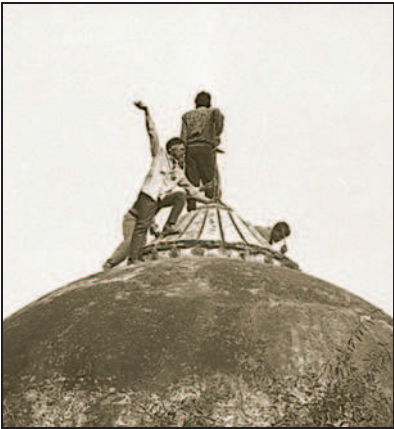
They urged me to say a few words to the crowd, which had swelled by then. I requested them to be patient, and promised to have the special edition of our paper available shortly with all the details they sought. But we needed peace and quiet.

People calmed down and dispersed. The only source of information was phone calls from our reporters and correspondents, but it was difficult to get in touch with them. By the afternoon, hundreds of people once again barged into the office. This time I came out confidently, but what happened was unexpected.

One man lifted me on to his shoulders and advanced towards the exit. I had seen leaders on people’s shoulders, but for me, it was an unpleasant experience. Outside, thousands of people had gathered. They wanted to know the news. The police officials had left by then. I was worried that I would be crushed if a stampede took place. We had reached a wall. By then, my fever had disappeared.

Somehow, I conveyed the information I had received till then, and requested them to go back, because the road was completely blocked. “We can give you the newspaper only when you free me,” I told them. My colleagues and I were allowed back to office.

The next thing I knew was that our city was engulfed in a communal frenzy. The administration declared a curfew, but people could not be controlled. The police also did not appear committed in stopping them. There was an unprecedented scene. A senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader, Satya Prakash Vikal,



Twenty seven years ago, our harmonious culture was undermined. Today, there is hope that order will be restored HT ARCHIVE

who used to live in Agra’s Kamala Nagar, came out of his house, and started walking. People started joining him one by one, and the crowds increased. They were shouting slogans like “*Jai Shri Ram, kasam Ram ki khaate hain, Mandir wahin banayenge*.” And, in no time, hundreds of people joined this group.

That day, I saw a unique example of the morale and efficiency of the police. Karmveer Singh was the senior superintendent of police in Agra. He did not have enough personnel at the station, but nevertheless, he, along with a dozen *jawans* and officers, stationed himself at the Ghatiya Azan Khan intersection. He wrapped a rope around himself, and other police officials too tied themselves with the same rope. Thus a human wall was created in front of the crowd swarming towards them.

Karmveer said loudly, no matter what happens to the officers, the crowd would not be allowed to go any further. After a bit of scuffle, the crowd returned. Karmveer Singh’s courage carried the day.

The situation was similar in other parts of the country. More than 3,000 people were killed and property worth crores damaged. Our harmonious culture and the tradition of coexistence were undermined.

So, it is heartening that November 9, 2019 was when those dark days were buried forever. While writing this, there have been no reports of communal conflict from anywhere in the country. In fact, news of Hindus and Muslims posing together for photographs have come in. In Orai, Uttar Pradesh, Muslim religious leaders have greeted a Hindu *mahant* with flowers. At many places, Hindus and Sikhs greeted Eid Milad-un-Nabi processions on Sunday. The majority community also did not show any sense of triumphalism. Social media was also relatively restrained this time. Is this because of the authority of this government? Or the positive pressure from the society? Whatever the case, this should be welcomed.

Some people have expressed their dissatisfaction, including Sunni Waqf Board lawyer Zafaryab Jilani, All India Muslim Personal Law Board convener Kamal Farooqui, and Asaduddin Owaisi. This is their right.

November 9 is also Allama Iqbal’s birthday. The great poet called Ram *Imaam-e-Hind*. We remember him for his famous poem *Saare jahan se achcha Hindostan hamara*... Is India heading toward being *saare jahan se achcha* (better than the entire world)? The answer will be clear in the coming days.

Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief, Hindustan Times. The views expressed are personal

FRIENDS & FOES

The corridor is a trap that Pakistan has set for India

It will not lead to a diplomatic detente. Instead, it gives Islamabad more leverage to use the Khalistani card



Seventy years of betrayal, dissembling, and, of course, terrorism and wars imposed on India should have been enough to convince every Indian to not expect anything good from Pakistan. If anything, India by now should have internalised the maxim: If it is from Pakistan, look every gift horse in the mouth. And yet, India has willingly, nay eagerly, accepted the “offer” from Pakistan to open a “corridor” providing pilgrims easy access to the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur.

In effect, India seems to have walked into a trap laid by Pakistan with eyes wide open. Instead of doing a “well left” to the “googly” bowled by the Pakistan army through its “selected” Prime Minister (PM), Imran Khan, the Narendra Modi government has attempted to play the ball. What were the powers-that-be thinking when they announced their acceptance of the corridor proposal?

One possible explanation is that the Modi government actually believes that the corridor was the South Asian equivalent of the Berlin Wall coming down, and “would act as a bridge between the people of the two countries.” But how could the government subscribe to this theory, commonly spread by those who are naive or ignorant about what Pakistan is and what Pakistan does?

Surely, PM Modi would have known about the efforts made by the Pakistani deep State to reignite the fires of terrorism in Punjab by inciting radical sections in the Sikh community. The targeted killings in Punjab, the efforts to orchestrate violence in the state, and the patronising of and support to remnants of the Khalistan terrorist groups, are well-known. This should have informed him of what the Pakistani intent and actions. The PM would also have specific inputs of how Pakistani officials have been working overtime among the Sikh diaspora in Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other parts of the world to revive the Khalistan movement, including by funding and promoting the Referendum 2020 initiative by the Khalistanis.

In the light of this information at their disposal, for anyone in government to get all lyrical over the Kartarpur corridor is, to say the least, perplexing. Given Pakistan’s unrelenting enmity towards India, the diplomatic dividend of the corridor is nothing more than a chimera.

The more plausible explanation is that both Pakistan and India are using Kartarpur to influence politics in Punjab. By giving a nod to the corridor, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) must have thought it would steal a march over the Congress in the state. What is more, it would take the wind out of



Both Pakistan and India are using Kartarpur to influence politics in Punjab PTI

Navjot Sidhu’s sails. He has been taking credit for the Pakistani “gift” given to him by the army chief, General Qamar Bajwa.

Using religion to burnish political credentials, and undercut opponents, is fraught with risks in a sensitive state like Punjab. India paid a very heavy price for precisely such disastrous politics in the 1980s and 1990s when the Congress propped up a radical preacher, Jarnail Singh Bindranwale, to queer the pitch for the Akalis. This time, it could be worse. Using Kartarpur as a political prop is akin to playing in to Pakistan’s hands. By shutting or controlling access to the corridor, and thereby causing even more trouble than it would normally be able to, Pakistan suddenly has new leverage.

The Pakistanis have found Sidhu useful. They have identified him as a person who can further their agenda, even if inadvertently and unwittingly. The way Bajwa made him the messenger of the corridor decision, the way the Pakistanis are projecting him as the man who made the corridor possible, the importance they are giving him by treating him as the real representative of Sikh sentiment and a friend of Pakistan — all suggest that the Pakistanis see in Sidhu their trump card to muddy the waters in the Indian border state. Sidhu should guard against this. It is possible that Sidhu sees this as an opportunity to come into his own. He has already burnt his bridges with the BJP. He does not like the Akalis. His future in the Congress is bleak. He has resigned from the state cabinet, and his wife has already quit the Congress. He could try the Aam Aadmi Party, but it is unlikely to be able to accommodate him.

The Kartarpur corridor would have been a fabulous initiative under normal circumstances. Unfortunately, as things stand, it will neither lead to a diplomatic detente, nor lead to a stable polity in Punjab. The wages of mixing religion with politics once again will haunt India.

Sushant Sareen is senior fellow, Observer Research Foundation. The views expressed are personal

India has done well to go ahead with Kartarpur

Security concerns should be addressed. But they cannot be allowed to trump landmark political initiatives



Visible diplomatic breakthroughs in the frozen India-Pakistan terrain are rare. When they occur, they must be applauded and celebrated. The opening of the Kartarpur corridor is one such breakthrough. The successful completion of the negotiation to establish such a corridor, construct it, and declare it open — all within a finite period — represents that rare cocktail of steps that together constitute a success.

Most major initiatives, especially those with a people-to-people dimension, in the India-Pakistan context, broadly have coincided with periods when the political relationship has been looking up. In the 1950s, agreements on traffic of pilgrims, sporting contests, and generally on cultural contacts, all overlapped with less hostile political contexts. Then the thaw of 1977 to 1979 saw the resumption of the Delhi-Lahore train (suspended since 1965), and the opening of the Indian consulate in Karachi, after diplomatic relations were re-established after the India-Pakistan War of 1971. The Delhi-Lahore bus came about in the context of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s famous visit to Lahore in 1999. Between 2004 and 2008, such steps multiplied following his next visit to Islamabad in 2004. The opening up of the Line of Control (LoC) for travel and trade (for the first time since 1947), the reopening of the Kokrapah Munabao rail link after its closure in 1965, the bus service to Nankana Sahib are only the most prominent of the measures then put in place.

The Kartarpur negotiation and corridor opening had no such positive context. On the contrary, the recent past has been a particularly turbulent phase of the relationship. This makes the corridor more significant.

Inevitably, in so heavily securitised a relationship, this step may be accompanied in India by a measure of cynicism, even frustration. Some feel that we have fallen into a Pakistan “trap” and the flood gates will now open for Pakistan to use the Khalistani card, or somehow leverage the corridor to advance its terrorist agenda. Such concerns also coalesce with positions that have a general antipathy to embark on anything positive to do with Pakistan. Most India-Pakistan breakthroughs are accompanied by similar fears and apprehensions. The point is not to dismiss these concerns, but rather

take them into account and devise systems and procedures accordingly.

The question of allowing Indians to go to Pakistan “on foot” across the Radcliffe Line at the Attari-Wagah border, or Pakistanis to traverse in the other direction, was held up for decades on similar grounds. Resistance was fierce on both sides by security agencies. Nevertheless, when such crossings were freely permitted from 2008 onwards, it was quickly realised that no real compromise with security had taken place. It was similar with the cross-LoC travel. Before it began, the doubts expressed on security grounds, again on both sides, seemed insurmountable. After being permitted, and established procedures drawn up, many of the concerns seemed exaggerated.

The point surely is that the general grounds of security cannot be allowed to trump important political initiatives. Security issues must be addressed through robust Standard Operating Procedures, rather than being used an argument for status quo, and denying religious and popular requests.

The Partition in north India had a calamitous impact on the devout of all faiths. Sikhs found that many of their most important shrines were west of the Radcliffe Line — in Lahore, Hasan Abdal, Nankana Sahib, Kartarpur. Similarly, for Muslims in Pakistan, Nizamuddin, Sirhind, Ajmer and other places were out of reach. There are similar examples of Hindu shrines in Punjab and in Sindh. From the very beginning, it was mutually accepted that access to these shrines must be allowed. Expanding pilgrimages through a variety of instruments became part of the India-Pakistan agenda.

Security concerns will persist — and for us in India it could be foolhardy to ignore them — but these can be, and are addressed, without denying the legitimate requests of our citizens. Admittedly, large Sikh Jathas visiting Pakistan would often be exposed to Khalistan propaganda. But, on the whole, Jatha leaders and the pilgrims themselves know how to insulate themselves from this. That considerations of security alone should stop pilgrim traffic was fortunately never seriously contemplated.

Much is being made of photographs of known terrorists being used in Pakistani propaganda. Pakistan will certainly use every opportunity to embarrass us — using not just religious shrines, but any other pretext. This is in the nature of the zero-sum relationship that exists. These and related provocations will continue. The real trap would be to fail to take political initiatives and let security concerns paralyse decision-making.

The government has acted with maturity and sagacity to avoid falling into the trap of being unresponsive to a longstanding demand for establishing the Kartarpur corridor. That its inauguration coincides with the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak is a further plus, and makes it a landmark decision in India-Pakistan relations and for Sikhs in India.

TCA Raghavan is a former high commissioner to Pakistan, and is currently DG, Indian Council of World Affairs. The views expressed are personal